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THE BALTIMORE SUN
9 March 1979

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Jackson questions if SALT will let U.S. verify Soviet compliance

Washington Bureau of The Sun

Washington—Senator Henry M. Jackson (D., Wash.) yesterday loosed a fierce attack on President Carter's claims that the United States will be able to verify whether the Soviet Union abides by provisions of the emerging Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.

The possibilities for undetected Russian cheating are too risky for the United States to accept, Mr. Jackson said in indicating that he will propose extensive changes in the treaty when it reaches the Senate.

Administration officials, who have been giving new signs that completion of the treaty is imminent, believe that any Senate undertaking to change its terms could wreck it. Mr. Jackson, who will play a pivotal role in the ratification debate, is known to doubt that premise.

His extensive commentary yesterday amounted to an indictment of the administration for accepting provisions through which the Russians could secretly gain military advantages. He also suggested that the treaty would leave the U.S. with inferior "explosive power," a matter he apparently will seek to correct during Senate consideration of the pact.

Verification difficulties were bad enough before the loss of electronic monitoring stations in Iran, Senator Jackson said. "Since Iran," he argued, "we have lost our ability to verify Soviet adherence to the ban on new types of ballistic missiles that is a central part of the treaty."

Besides the alleged inability to check on development of banned missile types, Mr. Jackson asserted that the U.S. has no way to verify that the Soviet Union abides by treaty limits on ranges of Cruise missiles or promises not to "upgrade the capabilities of the Backfire bomber."

The whole range of "provisions that we cannot verify constitute, in my judgment, a risk that it is imprudent for the United States to take," Senator Jackson said.

He challenged the Carter administration to tell the public "candidly and forthrightly what we can and what we cannot detect of possible Soviet actions in violation of the pending treaty."

President Carter said in his speech at the Georgia Institute of Technology February 20 that any SALT treaty he signs "will be adequately verifiable, using our own independent means" to check Soviet compliance.

Mr. Jackson said yesterday: "It is clearly not in the national interest for administration spokesmen to hide behind secrecy while making summary claims about verification that cannot be supported by the facts."

In giving assurances on verification, Mr. Carter said at Georgia Tech that the SALT stakes were too high "to rely on trust."

Regarding treaty limitations on Cruise missiles, Mr. Jackson claimed yesterday that "we would enter this treaty, if at all, on trust alone—trust that the Soviets for their part will honor the Cruise missile range limitation."

"I urge the administration to acknowledge that a number of provisions of the emerging treaty and protocol simply cannot be verified," Senator Jackson said. "The Senate and the American people can then decide whether to accept the risks that the administration is inviting us to share."

Mr. Jackson is chairman of a Senate Armed Services Committee panel that keeps tabs on SALT negotiations, although jurisdiction lies with the Foreign Relations Committee.

His remarks, distributed here yesterday, were prepared for a speech this morning before the Forum Club of Houston.